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Introduction

Russian interest in world literature predates 1917, but it was the October Revolution that gave special impetus to this attention so that it could begin to materialize, not least through generous state support.¹ The contributions to this wide-ranging volume, the first to consistently examine Soviet engagement with world literature from multiple institutional and disciplinary perspectives (intellectual literary; literary history and theory; comparative literature; translation studies; diaspora studies, to name but a few), focus on Soviet Russia, encompassing a period of some seventy years, while not neglecting the post-Soviet space where preoccupations with world literature continue to be relevant in the context of Russophone (often diasporic) writing. Our emphasis is on the lessons one could learn from the Soviet attention to world literature, both institutionally and intellectually; as such, we hope that the present volume would make a significant contribution to current debates on world literature beyond the field of Slavic and East European Studies and would foreground the need to think of world literature pluralistically, in a manner that is not restricted by the agendas of Anglophone academe.

The opening chapter of the volume, by Galin Tihanov, seeks to ‘multiply’ world literature and demonstrate that there is no world literature per se, but rather different world literatures, because at different times different communities produce different constructs that they label as world literature. Foremost amongst the lessons one could draw from the Soviet engagement with world literature is the compelling determination of Soviet intellectuals to conceive of world literature in a systematically non-Occidentocentric manner. With this, the Soviets were pioneering an approach to world literature that foreshadows our current concerns. But there is also another lesson emerging from the Soviet preoccupation with world literature: the conversation on world literature does

1 For earlier accounts of the Soviet engagement with world literature, see the literature in Galin Tihanov's contribution to this volume (esp. page 5 footnote 4).

not proceed in a vacuum, it is constantly interacting with, impacting on, and being impacted by, the conversation societies have about national literatures and literary theory. The chapter begins by briefly adumbrating four historically attestable meanings of ‘world literature,’ some of which can be seen at work in the Soviet discourse on world literature; it then identifies three different cultural and ideological horizons (or frameworks) of thinking about world literature in the Soviet Union and, significantly, locates their common ground—the glue that bound them together—in the master approach of de-Westernizing the very notion of world literature, an attitude consistently enacted by Soviet intellectuals engaging with the history of world literature.

The second chapter, Anne Lounsbury’s “On the Worldliness of Russian Literature,” opens with an inventory of Russia’s omissions from world literature scholarship. Rather than viewing them as a lapse (because it seems implausible to assume that all these scholars simply forget about, say, Tolstoy), Lounsbury asks what has made this sort of erasure possible—or perhaps even necessary? Could serious acknowledgement of Russia throw a wrench into western models of World Literature? *Must* Russian literature be absent from systems like Casanova’s? Her answer to this question grows out of nineteenth-century Russian literary texts themselves. These texts reveal an inchoate awareness that a category like World Literature—as it is articulated in the West—will not be able to accommodate them. In effect, classical Russian novels predict the neglect they will suffer at the hands of such systems, which is precisely the neglect that the Soviets’ new conceptions of World Literature will aim to redress.

Most of the following chapters in this book are devoted to the Soviet project for World Literature. A consistent theme in some of them, however, are the continuities between Soviet and pre-revolutionary conceptualizations of World Literature and practical efforts to realize them. Thus, focusing on the example of Armenian literature, Susanne Frank’s chapter “Armenian Literature as World Literature: Phases of Shaping It in the Pre-Soviet and Stalinist Contexts” reconstructs the modelling of the national canon of Armenian literature from 1915 throughout the twentieth century and demonstrates that already in the late imperial period, Armenian literature was conceptualized as “world literature.” The chapter also asks what happened to the canon when Armenian literature was reshaped as part of Soviet multinational literature and its most important contemporary representatives fell victim to Stalinism. It ends by retracing the phases of their re-canonization in later Soviet Union and in post-Soviet times.

By contrast, Katerina Clark’s chapter, “The Roles of ‘Form’ and ‘Content’ in World Literature as Discussed by Viktor Shklovsky in his Writings of the

Immediately Post-Revolutionary Years,” focuses on some of the intellectual breakthroughs of the early Soviet era. Clark opens her chapter with Franco Moretti’s conceptualization of the novel’s worldwide journey from the Anglo-French core to the periphery “as a compromise between foreign form and local content” and then, using Shklovsky’s writings and biography between 1917 and 1923, moves on to reconstruct the evolution in the latter’s thinking on the form-content binary. Clark concludes that over this half-decade Shklovsky made a double shift as compared with his pre-revolutionary writings: both a shift from a primary concern with the impact of specific features on the beholder/reader to a concern with overall plot organization and the orchestration of formal techniques, and a shift from relying exclusively on Russian literature to a main focus on West European literature. These shifts, she demonstrates, occurred as a result of Shklovsky’s work in the “World Literature” (*Vsemirnaia Literatura*) publishing house.

Appropriately, the next two articles concern that publishing house, which Maxim Gorky spearheaded shortly within months of the October Revolution and which existed for another five years. Conceived as a grandiose enterprise, it could not, under the conditions of the Civil War and post-Civil War institutional fragility, realize its ambition to translate “the treasures” of world literature into Russian. Nevertheless, it not only came to provide subsistence to some of Russia’s leading writers and intellectuals during these hungry times but also defined subsequent trends for Soviet translation. More specifically, in her chapter, “‘The Treasure Chest of World Literature’: Shaping the Concept of World Literature in Post-Revolutionary Russia,” Maria Khotimsky examines early Soviet attempts to define the concept of world literature and the publishing house’s practical efforts to present world literary heritage to the Soviet readers. She does so by analyzing the programmatic statements in the publishing house’s first two catalogues and then the paratextual practices of the actual translations.

In his chapter, “The Birth of New Out of Old: Translation in Early Soviet History,” Sergey Tyulenev tempers the novelties introduced by the publishing house with its inevitable reliance on pre-revolutionary traditions. The first generation of translators and members of the editorial board were representatives of the pre-revolutionary literary intelligentsia and as such selected pieces from the old world, which was supposed to be “destroyed to its foundation.” Tyulenev sees the overall project as a series of negotiations between continuities and discontinuities, ideological problems and suggested solutions, challenges and compromises, which came to define the new Soviet school of literary translation.

The *Vsemirnaia Literatura* chapters are followed by two others that deal with a slightly later institution that grounded Soviet literary internationalism: the multilingual magazine *International Literature* (1931–1943). In their chapter, entitled “*International Literature: A Multi-Language Soviet Journal as a Model of ‘World Literature’ of the Mid-1930s USSR*,” Elena Ostrovskaya, Elena Zemskova, Evgeniia Belskaia, and Georgii Korotkov offer the first holistic account of this journal across its four main linguistic sections (Russian, English, German, and French), seeing in it a utopian space in construction, premised on total translatability of world literature. The four different editions were, however, never uniform and the authors use the tools of digital humanities to establish their differences.

Edward Tyerman’s contribution, “Translating China into *International Literature: Stalin-Era World Literature Beyond the West*,” comes to similar conclusions regarding the centrality of translatability to the Soviet project for World Literature by examining the translation of contemporary Chinese literature on the pages of the magazine, and more specifically, the Soviet negotiation of the tensions between difference and commensurability within its literary map of the globe. Focusing on two case studies—Emi Siao’s poems and Lu Xun’s short stories—he concludes that Soviet translators of the 1930s sought to affirm the principle of translatability of Chinese culture. Texts produced in diverse global spaces reached the Soviet reader as commensurable specimens of “international literature,” rendered legible through translation and accompanying paratextual materials (introductions, critical essays, photographs, etc.).

Concluding the interwar history of the Soviet Republic of Letters, Schamma Schahadat’s chapter, “World Literature and Ideology: The Case of Socialist Realism,” finds the Republic’s most explicit articulation in Maxim Gorky’s and Karl Radek’s famous speeches delivered at the inaugural Writers Congress. The literary histories with which their accounts open culminate in the Soviet-proletarian-socialist realist literature of the 1930s. In this vision, Moscow emerges as a capital of both the worldwide international proletarian literature and Soviet multinational literature.

Taking us to the post-WWII reconfiguration of Soviet literary internationalism, Rossen Djagalov’s chapter, “Premature Postcolonialists: The Afro-Asian Writers’ Association (1958–1991) and Its Literary Field,” traces the rise and fall of this international organization that sought to be the literary equivalent of the Non-Aligned Movement, except that it was aligned: thanks to the writers of Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus, Soviet literary bureaucracies were able to claim a prominent place on the Afro-Asian table. Relying on the archives of Soviet literary internationalism and the biographies of multiple Association

members (now canonical postcolonial writers), this chapter places it in the longer history of Soviet literary internationalism and competing Cold-War literary internationalisms and then describes the main structures through which it sought to forge its own literary field: literary congresses, a Permanent Bureau, a multi-lingual literary quarterly (*Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings*) and an Afro-Asian literary Prize (also *Lotus*), institutions that remind us of interwar-era Soviet literary internationalism.

The volume ends in the present moment and outside of Russia, with Maria Rubins's chapter "Can 'Worldliness' Be Inscribed into the Literary Text? Russian Diasporic Writing in the Context of World Literature." Focusing on Andrei Makine's novels, the poetry of the Ferghana school, and the transcultural pluralistic practices of contemporary Russian-Israeli writers, she returns to the question of (un)translatability, which concerned early Soviet writers, translators, and critics, too, but which contemporary Russophone diasporic writing tends to resolve completely differently. Their search for the untranslatable becomes a means for inscribing their worldliness into the text. Rubins's analysis, thus, articulates the self-reflexive strategies of authors who depend on the Russian publishing industry yet reject Russian national identity and try to position themselves in a broader, if imprecisely defined, "world."

Galin Tihanov, Anne Lounsbury, and Rossen Djalalov

CHAPTER 1

World Literature in the Soviet Union: Infrastructure and Ideological Horizons

Galin Tihanov

This text wants to pursue a somewhat different direction in the current conversation on world literature; it seeks to ‘multiply’ world literature and demonstrate that *there is no world literature per se, but rather different world literatures*, because at different times different communities produce different constructs that they label as world literature. In my title, I signal that here we are dealing with answers to the questions what world literature is and how to write its history that come from Soviet Russia, encompassing a period of some seventy years. My emphasis is on the lessons one could learn from the Soviet attention to world literature; foremost amongst these is the compelling determination of Soviet intellectuals to conceive of world literature in a systematically non-Occidentocentric manner. With this, the Soviets were pioneering an approach to world literature that foreshadows our current concerns, as I will try to demonstrate. But there is also another lesson emerging from the Soviet preoccupation with world literature: the conversation on world literature does not proceed in a vacuum, it is constantly interacting with, impacting on, and being impacted by, the conversation societies have about national literatures and literary theory. I begin by briefly adumbrating four historically attestable meanings of ‘world literature’ that are still at work in the Soviet debates; I then identify three different cultural and ideological horizons (or frameworks) of thinking about world literature in the Soviet Union and, significantly, locate their common ground, the glue that bound them together, in the master approach of de-Westernizing the very notion of world literature, an attitude consistently enacted by Soviet intellectuals engaging with the history of world literature.

Four Meanings of ‘World Literature’

I commence with a brief exploration of exactly what is meant by ‘world literature,’ so that we could fathom the relevance of its various meanings to the debates in Soviet Russia. I will single out four facets of the concept of world literature. Let me begin with the first understanding which continues to be significant: the understanding of world literature as *evidence and embodiment of cultural diversity*. Needless to say, this understanding is today upheld by various cultural institutions that (re)produce the materiality of world literature; literary prizes and international book festivals play a particularly salient part, the latter often operating on an almost quota basis that ensures diversity is honored and championed, sometimes at the expense of overlooking aesthetic preeminence. The roots of this understanding of world literature go back to the end of the eighteenth century, to the work of historians and literati, notably Schlözer and Herder. Coincidentally, Schlözer was a historian of Russia (but also an author in the tradition of what at the time would be referred to as ‘universal history’) who spent some not inconsiderable time in St. Petersburg before accepting a chair at the University of Göttingen. Schlözer conceives of world literature precisely as evidence and embodiment of the world’s cultural diversity. From this point of view, for him, there are no large and small literatures in the evaluative sense we would read into this opposition today. On the contrary, for Schlözer, even the smallest literature can be an object of admiration, of study and of cultivating the ability of recognizing and accepting cultural difference.¹ This attitude is also recognizable in Herder’s work; Herder also behaves as a collector of samples of the literatures and oral cultures of various communities. By the second (post-humous) edition of his famous anthology, *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (Voices of the Peoples in Songs), which has a complicated editorial history into which I will not go on this occasion, we find examples from Peru, Madagascar, etc. This unrelenting push to absorb the cultural diversity of the world is, of course, related to the philosophical tendency of the time, which tries to imagine an extended humanity and to ‘find’ signs of rational life far beyond the borders of Europe; at the same time, the Enlightenment begins to work out in earnest the

1 On Schlözer, Herder, and world literature, with references to the relevant secondary literature, see G. Tihanov, “Cosmopolitanism in the Discursive Landscape of Modernity: Two Enlightenment Articulations,” in *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, ed. David Adams and Galin Tihanov (London: Legenda, 2011), 133–152, esp. 142, and G. Tihanov, “Introduction,” in *Vergleichende Weltliteraturen/Comparative World Literatures*, ed. Dieter Lamping and Galin Tihanov (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2020), 283–287.

doctrine of Eurocentrism, according to which European literature and culture are the pinnacle of civilization, while the monuments of culture one locates outside of Europe should serve as little more than intriguing, even praiseworthy, but rarely perfect iterations of universal rationality. In Soviet Russia, as we shall see, this ambivalent drive towards incorporating non-Western literatures and cultures whilst preserving the educational and cultural primacy of the European canon is very much on display.

The second understanding of world literature which is actively present in the debates in Soviet Russia sees world literature as a special *conduit of culture, of knowledge, erudition, and as a mechanism that cultivates the ability to communicate*. The beginning of this understanding of world literature can be attributed to Wieland who briefly wrote at the turn of the nineteenth century about world literature as a source of new knowledge about the world that is bound to enhance one's capacity of communicating with others. This is a slightly different view of world literature, an understanding related to what in Foucauldian language might be called "practices of the self," although Wieland is not at all interested in the intervention of power or the role institutions would play in this essentially humanistic pedagogical project. He seems to envision this process as pure, unencumbered, and unmediated. The individual is alone in the company of good literature: it enriches him/her, s/he learns in the process; as a result, the human within the individual expands, and the valences of communication multiply.

These two possible definitions of world literature begin to converge and intertwine in a visible way in the third understanding of world literature: world literature conceived of as a *canon*, as all the best and most enduring that humanity has succeeded in producing, taken, according to the first understanding, from all possible sources, from all parts of the world, from small and large cultures, from cultures of colonizers and of the colonized. This is a humanistic, often conservative understanding of world literature, which also often forgets to ask the crucial questions about politics, power, and history. This understanding of world literature has proved tenacious and resilient, it continues to shape, in no small measure, current notions and practices of world literature.

The last definition of world literature, the last type of understanding I want to articulate, is historically much more recent; it is related to polemics around world literature which take us into the twenty-first century. David Damrosch's ground-breaking, and later often interrogated and contested, *What is World Literature?*² works out an understanding of world literature that is different from

2 David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

the first three in that it is interested not solely (perhaps not even as much) in literature per se and seeks instead to establish a common denominator between literature and other discourses. Here, literature becomes a *participant in an endless flow of information* which, through translation and intermedial adaptation, transgresses national, linguistic, and discursive boundaries. It is not by chance that Damrosch defines the subject of world literature as the study of the *circulation of texts in translation*. This idea of circulation is not insignificant; it is part and parcel of this new understanding of literature as inclusive and representative of larger information flows and exchanges.

All this seems to me to be verily important because it is an understanding that finds itself in tension with the idea of world literature as a canon. In some ways, Damrosch's approach to world literature is foreshadowed by Goethe's. Of course, the idea of world literature did not begin with Goethe in 1827 (an already old Goethe talking to Eckermann, and Eckermann writing down these conversations years later based on the notes he took, sometimes producing entire sentences or even paragraphs out of a few keywords); in fact, this entire discourse commenced about fifty years earlier, with Schözer and Wieland. What Goethe did, however, unlike Schözer and Wieland, was to dynamize the notion of world literature. Schözer, Wieland, and Herder would imagine world literature as statically available, they were not particularly interested in the dialogue or the communication between different literatures from different cultural zones. The samples of writing that caught their attention would often inhabit the drawers of an imaginary cabinet of curiosities; these samples could always be conveniently pulled out, enjoyed, and put back in their place again, without any stipulation or expectation of interaction between them.

Goethe, however, believed that world literature is an effect of the transborder communication of entire networks of people involved in the production of literature: writers, translators (a no doubt important group), critics, and readers.³ Without communication between these networks, world literature would not be impossible: in this sense, it is not a given any more (as it was for his predecessors), it is a task (hence his belief that its advent could be accelerated). In a sense, Damrosch retains this pragmatic disposition, but he tends to further de-canonize world literature and really only imagines it as *one* of the ingredients of the information flow that globalization has made possible. To this, he also

3 The literature on Goethe and *Weltliteratur* is vast; of the more recent comprehensive accounts, see, e.g. Dieter Lamping, *Die Idee der Weltliteratur. Ein Konzept Goethes und seine Karriere* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010).

adds the logic of the market and its mechanisms (something already present in an inchoate manner in Goethe's vision of world literature).

Marx, of course, is also relevant here, partly because we are talking about the Soviet debates, but also because Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, twenty-one years after Goethe, return to his idea, now insisting on the emergence of world literature as inevitable. According to them, this inevitability is grounded in the expansion (but also contraction) of the world that is available to us, which is in turn rooted in technological progress and homogenization as a result of the global spread of the capitalist mode of production that really knows no national boundaries, just like the world literature that they believed, passionately and perhaps somewhat naively, would ineluctably supersede national literatures.

The Soviet Interest in World Literature: Chronology and Infrastructure

Russian interest in world literature predates 1917, but it was the October Revolution that gave special impetus to this attention so that it could begin to materialize, not least through generous state support.⁴ The founding father of the Soviet discourse of world literature is an intellectual who cannot be contained within the narrow confines of Marxism; even as he was often a proponent of left-leaning policies and ideology, Maxim Gorky was an *enfant terrible* more than a predictably loyal fellow-traveler. It was Gorky who founded, in the midst of a brutal civil war, an important publishing house with the support of his influential friends in the communist hierarchy; "Vsemirnaia Literatura" ('World Literature',

4 For a general account of the Soviet engagement with world literature between the two world wars, see Annie Epelboin, "Littérature mondiale et Révolution," in *Où est la littérature mondiale?* (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2005), 39–49; for a more essayistic account see Jérôme David, *Spectres de Goethe: les métamorphoses de la 'littérature mondiale'* (Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2011) (there the chapter "Petrograd, 1918"). More recently, see, amongst others, Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema Between the Second and the Third Worlds* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020); Amelia M. Glaser and Steven S. Lee, eds., *Comintern Aesthetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020); Katerina Clark, *Eurasia Without Borders: The Dream of a Leftist Literary Commons, 1919–1943* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021). For seminal studies that go beyond the Soviet period and look at Russian literature and culture from a global perspective, see Kevin Platt, ed., *Global Russian Cultures* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018) and Maria Rubins, ed., *Redefining Russian Literary Diaspora, 1920–2020* (London: UCL Press, 2021).

1918–1923) was a focal point of Soviet Russia's efforts to bring to the masses a canon of world literature that would serve an educational purpose with a noble, levelling-up social intent. This was an extremely ambitious, perhaps even megalomaniac undertaking. In its strongest years, the publishing house would employ on its various projects around three hundred-fifty people who would receive honoraria and other payments even when they would not deliver on the contracts they had signed.⁵ But that was not all: alongside the publishing house, there was a translation theory studio. We find some of the Petrograd Formalists, notably Shklovsky and Tynianov, amongst the lecturers in that studio,⁶ next to recognized translators such as Chukovskii. There was also a studio for young writers who needed to learn the basics of literary theory. As one can appreciate (but this has not happened until now), Gorky's project envisaged and produced an organic connection between creative writing and literary and translation theory. It is vital to recognize that very early on literary and translation theory went hand in hand in Soviet Russia, and that they did so in productive symbiosis with creative writing. (Shklovsky's memoirs of the 1920s, especially his *A Sentimental Journey*, is one of the most powerful examples of this symbiosis.) For too long, we have tended to treat literary theory as pure sublimation, a sum total of principles and approaches that are detached from, and hierarchically elevated above, the practice of creative writing. This foundational synergy between theory and creative writing, as well as the effective coexistence of literary and translation theory, are crucial in understanding the genesis of the modern notion of world literature, for which translation, as Damrosch persuasively argues, is as indispensable as is the belief in what, elsewhere, I have termed "the portability of literariness."⁷

Less than a decade after the demise of Gorky's World Literature publishing house, and in the year when Gorky returned to the Soviet Union for good, the Soviet infrastructure of research in, and appropriation of, world literature

5 There is a considerable body of research on the "World Literature" publishing house; the details adduced above can be found in the documentation and introduction in "A. M. Gor'kii—organizator izdatel'stva "Vsemirnaia literatura," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 2 (1958): 67–95. Of the more recent work, see, e.g., Maria Khotimsky, "World Literature, Soviet Style: A Forgotten Episode in the History of an Idea," *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2013): 119–154, and Sergey Tyulenev, "Vsemirnaia Literatura: Intersections between Translating and Original Literary Writing," *Slavic and East European Journal* 60, no. 1 (2016): 8–21.

6 On Shklovsky and world literature (and on his mixed reactions to Gorky's project), see Galin Tihanov, "World Literature, War, Revolution: The Significance of Viktor Shklovskii's *A Sentimental Journey*," in *Transnational Russian Studies*, ed. Andy Byford, Connor Doak and Stephen Hutchings (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 112–126.

7 See the epilogue in my book *The Birth and Death of Literary Theory: Regimes of Relevance in Russia and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

underwent expansion through the creation of the Institute of World Literature (IMLI: Institut mirovoi literatury; in Russian, there is a subtle but not insignificant difference between 'vsemirnaia' and 'mirovaia,' which deserves special treatment beyond the scope of this text). Significantly, when IMLI was founded in 1932, the adjective 'world' was absent from the title; named in honor of Gorky, the new institution was called simply The Maxim Gorky Institute of Literature. At the time this would be interpreted as Stalin's reward for Gorky's many contributions (or, by some, as a preemptive bribe that would make it difficult for Gorky to dissent from the Party line). Only in 1938, after the death of Gorky, was the Institute renamed, and from then on to this day it continues to be known as the Institute of World Literature. The question arises as to what exactly had happened in Soviet Russia in the intervening years to make it both possible and necessary to rename this scientific institute and include the descriptor "world" in its title. By the mid-1930s, the USSR had begun changing its cultural policy, actively seeking the support of left-wing democratic intellectuals from the West.⁸ By that time, the queue of prominent visitors to the USSR was growing longer; anybody who was somebody would be invited, especially if s/he was of leftist or at least democratic persuasion: Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland, Lion Feuchtwanger, and even André Gide, a choice the Soviets would later regret, because upon his return he would write his famous book of detraction, *Return from the Soviet Union*, in which he made a number of observations the Soviet authorities would perceive as extremely unpleasant, nay offensive. (Lion Feuchtwanger offered a competing narrative designed to demonstrate solidarity with the Soviet regime: *Moscow 1937: my visit described for my friends*.) This is also the time when the Soviets would send delegations to various international fora taking place in the West, notably to the First International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in Paris in 1935. The Soviet delegation in Paris included prominent Russian-Jewish writers; in Paris, these Soviet intellectuals practiced what could oxymoronically be called licensed dissidence: Pasternak, Babel, and Ehrenburg talked about a humanism that tends to eschew class ideology and veers rather towards a set of universal values.⁹

8 Of the literature on this, see especially Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), and Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

9 All speeches delivered at the Paris Congress can be found in: Sandra Teroni and Wolfgang Klein, eds., *Pour la défense de la culture: les textes du Congrès international des écrivains. Paris, juin 1935* (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2005).

Thus, what was taking place in the mid-1930s in Soviet Russia is probably best grasped as a two-way process: the Soviet Union invites the world to see and appreciate it, but it also exports its culture to the world. As a result of these changes in cultural policy in the mid-1930s, a gradual rethinking of world literature took place in the Soviet Union, fostering a view of world literature as the literature of the global left: the class attribute is not removed, but the scope is now global, accommodating various shades of leftism and a whole swathe of legitimate cultural differences. Writers from the USA would also be invited to the Soviet Union at that time (Theodore Dreiser is just one example), as were writers from the Global South. In a very consistent manner, during the 1930s this policy of breaking with cultural isolationism helped the maturation of an idea of world literature in which the world (both in terms of provenance and in terms of the values the process of literary world-making articulates) was largely synonymous with the ideas, aspirations, and symbolic repertoire of the global democratic left.

The last major episode in this enduring Soviet interest in world literature—and a pillar of the institutional infrastructure buttressing this interest—was the multi-volume collective *History of World Literature*, a unique accomplishment of the Soviet humanities and a monument to the Soviet ambition to conceive of world literature as a process rather than a static given. Initially planned as a ten-volume publication, it was eventually completed in eight volumes. The beginning of this project lay back in 1960–1961, when the first conference of Soviet literary scholars on the issues of world literature was convened; even at that early stage, pressing issues and disagreements around methodology would make themselves felt; the crucial question, which fueled prolonged discussion, was how to write the history of world literature so that it is not simply a narrative about individual national literatures that coexist but somehow do not intersect or interact. The Soviet history of world literature wanted to be a decisively non-Occidentocentric history built on the recognition of temporal depth and change rather than an account of the literatures of the world that would follow a static encyclopedic design. In the absence of access to relevant documents, it is difficult to determine what exactly caused the huge gap between 1960 and 1983 (when the first volume saw the light of day), but in a country practicing centralized planning and distribution of resources, a prestige project such as this multi-volume work would have hardly been affected by lack of funding. What held up this project for so long was most likely the substantive and prolonged debate within the authors' collective about the methodology that was to be adopted if this were to be a modern, genuinely non-Occidentocentric history of world

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